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XTRAVAGANCE

WALTZING WITH VIENNESE WINES



FIN MANAGING director Benjawan Wisootsat makes the first toast of the night.

Two Austrian chefs serve a gourmet feast that Mozart would have enjoyed

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If you'd asked Austrians participating in the recent Unique Austria wine dinner at the Dusit Thani Hotel's D'Sens French restaurant the best thing to come out of their country, they probably wouldn't have mentioned Mozart. The right answer, at least that evening, was Gruner Veltliner, Austria's veritable national treasure. This white wine variety is to Austrian wine drinkers what Mozart is to classical musicians.

Bring in the famed Austrian chef duo Rudolf and Karl Obauer, and you've got a truly royal Austrian dinner that dates back to the glorious Austro-Hungarian Empire. And that's what a select gathering of gourmets from the Austrian and German business world were lucky enough to enjoy at the "Unique Austria" dinner.

A little background on the chef duo:
The Obauer brothers with two
Michelin stars hail from Werfen in the
Salzburg region of Austria, home to
their restaurant, are famed for their
French cuisine, having studied in
France under such culinary stars as
Jean and Pierre Troisgros, Alain
Chapel, and Emile Jung. Besides the
two Michelin stars, the couple have
been awarded four chef hats by "Gault
Millau" and five crowns by the gourmet
guide "A la Carte".

Their classic dishes include trout strudel, cat-fish with Austrian-style roasted potatoes and Werfener-style lamb.

For the night, there was plenty of the Veltliner and much more from Fred Loimer in Kamptal, courtesy of FIN, Thailand's first speciality wine distributor. Loimer is famous for the Veltliner and Riesling (representing 80 per cent of its wines) themselves ranked amongst the best wines not just Austria but the wine world. The Veltliner, the most popular and widely grown, represents 30 per cent of Austria's wine pro-



FROM LEFT, Monique and Wayne Buckingham, Jan Ganser, Rolf-dieter Danie, Alexander Paufler and Karin Ashri.



The Obauer brothers

duction, of which 80 per cent is drunk in the country.

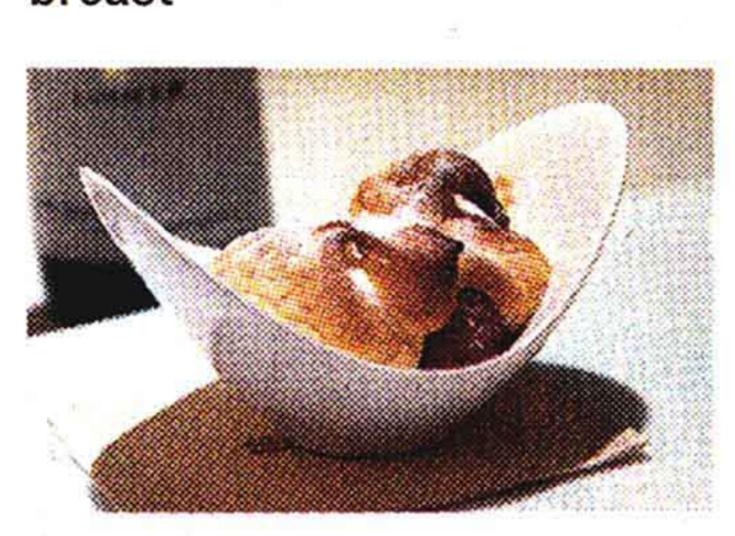
Meanwhile the culinary brothers delivered a seven-course menu, a well-balanced selection of beef, pork, fish, duck and vegetables, which mostly bordered on the salty and sour side. That's where Austrian dry white wines worked wonders before a dessert wine added to a happy sweet ending.

The aperitif came in two choices: the 2010 Lois Gruner Veltliner and the 2009 Rose Zweigelt.

The first course was pig ham terrine



SLOW ROASTED supreme of Challans duck breast



Raspberry soufflé 'Salzburg Castle'



Old fashioned Viennese breaded milk fed veal cutlet

and langoustines served with pickled selected forest mushrooms and spiced baby pumpkin, which was partnered with the 2009 Gruner Veltliner DAC Reserve Terrassen. With its spice-peppery and herbal notes, it is a drinkable wine with fruitiness and acidity.

The second course was light creamy root celery potage scented with saffron and served with a delicate fresh water pike fish fillet, which was served with the 2009 Riesling DAC Reserve Seeberg. The fish seemed to float in the foamy thick soup. When sipped with the wine, the creamy texture of the dish contrasted with the juicy flavours of apple and kiwifruit of the Riesling. There are refreshing aromas of mango and pineapple too. Fruit flavours and fish went together just fine. But the dish did feel very light though.

The light mode continued with the next course – spice cured lemon salmon served on a delicate blackberry risotto and cold pressed virgin olive oil, which was married with the 2009 Grüner Veltliner DAC Reserve Spiegel.

The notes of citrus, lentil and peach from the wine complemented the flavours of spices of the dish so well.

Next was old fashion Viennese breaded milk fed veal cutlet with young beetroot salad, home-made cranberry salsa and special Azka Chutney. The potion was big, with a selection of seasonings, which had several flavours. It was paired with the 2009 Fred Zweigelt whose aromas of cherry and vanilla come right to the fore. It added even more fruity flavours to the crunchy breaded veal, but the wine worked well in cleansing the palate.

After a sorbet, we tucked into the main dish: slow roasted supreme of Challans duck breast with old fashion apple strudel, organic sugar glazed baby carrots and Averna duck jus. This was an intense dish with amazing sauce. The "duck of kings" was of course fatty, but the meat was rich and tender. It went well with the 2007 Pinot Noir Dechant, a good choice for turkey or duck. This is a very concentrated, full-of-character wine with aromas of dark forest berries.

Much anticipating the dessert wine of the night, I was pleased with the last course – raspberry soufflé "Salzburg Castle" with minted marzipan with gin and lime sherbet. It was paired with the 2009 Riesling Trockenbeerenauslese, one of Loimer's famous sweet wines. It is easy to detect the flavours of ripe peaches, honey and spices in this syrupy wine, which never overpowered the dessert anyway. The sweetness was just right.